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## VOCATIONAL LATIN

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The proposal to establish courses in vocational Latin is one of the significant signs of the times. For while the sum total of the Latin enrolment in the schools has continued to give that subject the leading place in the foreign-language field, it is still true that the center of gravity has shifted markedly. In the state of California the situation is perhaps extreme, but it indicates very clearly the general trend.

For the year 1915 Mr. Will C. Wood, commissioner of secondary education, in collecting the statistics for the various high-school subjects, found that the enrolment in Latin in the public schools for first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year Latin was roughly in the proportion 8, 5, 1, 0.7.<sup>1</sup> In one respect these figures are somewhat confusing, for the category "first year" is doubtless made to cover also the children enrolled in the seventh and eighth grades of the intermediate schools. As these children come on into the later years, it is to be hoped that a larger proportion will round out a four-year Latin course; but at the present time Cicero and Vergil make but a poor showing.

In less measure this is true the country over; probably not more than one out of five or six who begin Latin perseveres throughout the four-year course. The time has passed when teachers of Latin may rest content to plan their work on the basis of a four-year course upheld by prescription. The demand of the hour is for concentration upon the problem of first- and second-year Latin—and with two aims in mind: (1) so to enrich the first two years that the student will desire of his own volition to continue the work beyond

<sup>1</sup> In total enrolment in the public schools Latin still leads in California, the figures for 1915 being as follows: Latin 15,303, Spanish 10,844, German 6,680, French 2,990, Greek 137.

that point, and (2) to make the work of the first two years pre-eminently worth while even for those who can pursue the subject no farther. Under this second head vocational Latin naturally finds a place.

Inasmuch as teachers of Latin themselves have been rather slow in making adjustments to meet the changed conditions, it is not strange that critics on the outside quite fail to understand the present situation. A case in point is to be found in a recent article by President Guth, of Goucher College, in which he argues for the abolition of Latin as a prerequisite for the A.B. degree.<sup>1</sup> It would be a pity, he says, if, because of lack of prescription of the study, the value of Latin literature should be unknown to the coming generation; but there is no danger that this will be the case, because all that is best can be retained in a good translation, just as the spirit of the Hebrew prophets lives in the English version. He continues:

Favored is he who takes to Greek and Latin. His joy will be full. But the fulness will come, not from a haphazard and painfully continued three or four years' struggling in the unsteady saddle of a pony for a meagre proficiency in Latin and Greek. It can only come from the inspiration of a long, earnest, voluntary, and, therefore, enjoyable study.

In President Guth's mind, then, the matter seems to take some such form as this: (a) the one value that may accrue from a study of Latin is the development of a power to read with ease and appreciation the difficult masterpieces of the language; (b) the rank and file of the students gain no such power; (c) they should, therefore, be relieved of the requirement; (d) the few students of a literary turn who "take to" Latin may be so indulged as long (presumably) as school boards feel that they can afford to maintain small classes for this purpose.

In the face of such a train of thought one is fain to exclaim with Cicero, *plena errorum sunt omnia*; but, for the present purpose, we may be content to single out one only of the underlying misconceptions, namely, the assumption that Latin instruction is a failure unless it results in the development of power to read with ease and appreciation the difficult masterpieces of the language. In the days

<sup>1</sup> "The Latin Entrance Requirement," *School and Society*, III, No. 72 (May 13, 1916), 701 ff.

of yore, when it was the normal thing to devote six or more years to the study of Latin and Greek, it was possible to secure results in the way of literary appreciation which cannot normally be hoped for when the very great majority of Latin students do not pursue the subject beyond the second year.

This is a fact that we must face squarely. A year or two of Latin will not develop an ordinary ploughboy into a Milton. But, on the other hand, there are solid and substantial values that may be realized from a two-year course in Latin—values that are as real for the majority of students, who carry the study no farther, as for the smaller number who go on to third- and fourth-year Latin. If we are wise and take a long look forward, we shall develop these values sedulously and publish them widely. In this way, as the protecting aegis of prescription is withdrawn gradually, Latin will be found to be firmly established in the public schools on a basis all its own.<sup>1</sup> Though at this point the ground is more or less familiar,

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it may be worth while to warn against a misconception regarding the conferring of the A.B. degree upon students who offer no Latin. In the state universities and some other large institutions it is doubtless inevitable that the A.B. degree shall be made the goal of endeavor for students in more than one line of work; but the adoption of the "open A.B." does not necessarily mean that fewer students will offer Latin than did so under the old plan. For example, in a large university which lately adopted the "open A.B." the students now have the option of proceeding toward the degree by two routes—one literary, and characterized by four years of Latin or Greek, the other scientific, and characterized by advanced mathematics and additional science. Confronted by this alternative the students divide up into groups much as they did before, the election of Latin holding strong and steady. From this point of view the difference is chiefly a matter of the tag, i.e., the scientific group in the culture college will be labeled at the end "A.B." rather than "B.S."

When, however, a university adopts the open A.B., a great cry is likely to be raised to the effect that "Latin is no longer required for the degree"; and popular misconception regarding the transaction doubtless results in some loss of prestige for Latin; but, from within, Latin has little to fear from the open A.B., provided that the students who do not offer Latin are required to present mathematics instead. It is one thing to crown two courses of equal difficulty with the degree A.B. and quite another to offer the degree to all comers who present sufficient units. If the latter shameless bid for numbers is advocated, the teachers of classics will find allies in the very people who fought for an A.B. degree open enough to include the scientific group.

As an illustration of the ease with which we find what we set out to seek, President Guth's article may well be compared with the pamphlets recently put forth by Professors Bushnell and Place, of Syracuse University, on requirements in Latin and Greek for the A.B. degree.

it may not be out of place to enumerate here some of the chief values to be derived from a course in Latin that is limited to two years.

1. *Increase of the student's knowledge of English and improvement in his power of expression.*—Up to date much has been accomplished in this department, and, if the signs fail not, the next large advance in elementary Latin instruction will fall within this field. Just how this will be wrought out is not yet clear; but he who runs may see at a glance the possibilities that lie in the realm of investigation which yields word-lists such as those worked out by Dr. Gray<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Radin.<sup>2</sup>

2. *Acquisition of a linguistic foundation that makes the study of a Romance language easy.*—This value of Latin training has long been recognized; but it is fitting that it be now emphasized. For in the schools the enrolment in Latin not only far outranks that of any other foreign language, but (as shown above) this enrolment is heavily massed in the first two years of the course—a situation ideal for laying the foundation for future linguistic study; and, best of all, leading teachers of Romance welcome this co-operation. Thus some time ago it was desired to send out to the Latin teachers of California some statements from men in different departments of their idea of the value of the study of Latin in the schools. In this connection Professor Schevill, head of the Spanish work at the University of California, thus expressed himself: "Students who wish to specialize in any of the Romance languages and literatures can have no adequate knowledge or appreciation of the subject without a good Latin foundation." And Professor Chinard, head of the French department, has this to say: "I should welcome any attempt to put Latin back into its old place in the curriculum of our secondary schools. Of all the languages it is the one which has the greatest educational value." The proposal of co-operation is specially timely just at this juncture, when the study of Spanish is becoming so popular.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Classical Journal*, XI, No. 1 (October, 1915), 33 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XI, No. 3 (December, 1915), 164 ff.

<sup>3</sup> For such purposes as this, statements from men known locally are of course most effective. The California circular from which citation is made above is still available; and single copies desired as samples may be had gratis by addressing the writer of this article.

3. *Mental discipline*.—Of this good old doctrine we need no longer be ashamed. Its soundness is proved beyond question by the facts of everyday experience; and the psychologists who thought they had discredited it are now recanting manfully.<sup>1</sup> Moreover—most hopeful sign of all—the pedagogues are beginning even to make merry over the counter doctrine of “no transfer.”<sup>2</sup> In the mastery of Latin there is a logical exercise comparable in its value to the benefits derived from the study of mathematics. In time this fact will be generally recognized again.<sup>3</sup>

4. *Culture*.—This benefit, which used to be ranked first, must take the last place in a discussion of the values derivable from a two-year course of Latin study. The term “culture” as here used is meant to cover the mental enlargement that results from sympathetic touch with the life of the past—the thrill of reading *in the original* words penned two thousand years ago which yet prove the whole world kin. From this point of view the increased attention given of late to short quotations from authors like Horace is significant.

The Commission on College-Entrance Requirements did a good work in laying so much stress upon power to read at sight; but it may be questioned whether the present trend in textbooks designed to meet that requirement is not reactionary from the point of view of cultural enrichment of the work of the first two years. The program seems to be: (1) concentration upon preparation for Caesar in the first year, (2) intensive study of two books of Caesar in the third half-year, (3) practice in sight-reading (mostly from Caesar) in the fourth half-year.

This program of study may solve the problem of entrance examinations for those who have to take them; but our question is larger than this. Can we not prepare students to meet the very

<sup>1</sup> See “Latin and Greek in Education,” *University of Colorado Bulletin*, XIV, No. 9 (September, 1914), 14 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See J. G. Thompson, “Transfer of General Powers,” *Journal of Education*, LXXXIII, No. 19 (May 11, 1916), 507 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Two recent magazine articles might well be read in this connection: “Some Fallacies in the Modern Educational Scheme,” by A. E. Stearns, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1916; and “Should Students Study?” by W. T. Foster, in *Harper's Magazine*, September, 1916.

just entrance requirement without so circumscribing the work of the first two years and without so robbing it of cultural content? There is one possible solution which has not yet been generally tried, and that is the plan of devoting three half-years to preparation for the continuous reading of a Latin author. Such a plan would have a double advantage; not only would it make room for cultural features in the early stages of the work, but it would not postpone the acquisition of the power to read Latin, as Latin, until the end of the second year. For the added time allowance would make possible the introduction of material so graded that the exercise of reading would be a pleasure at every stage. Signs are not wanting that this plan will soon be given an adequate trial.<sup>1</sup>

Some reader may be asking: What has all this discussion to do with the subject of vocational Latin? Much in every way—for if vocational Latin is to be *Latin*, the argument for it must rest on grounds very similar to those outlined above for two years of Latin in the regular course. In vocational Latin special stress will be laid upon 1 and 2, i.e., upon improving the student's grasp upon English and preparing him for rapid and easy acquisition of a modern foreign language.<sup>2</sup> But 3 and (particularly) 4 must not be neglected; for who needs the broadening of a cultural outlook, if it be not the people who are looking forward to years of monotonous routine work in some subordinate commercial capacity?

The pioneer experiment in vocational Latin conducted by Mr. A. S. Perkins, of the Dorchester High School,<sup>3</sup> seems to meet all these conditions admirably. Of the inception of the plan he says:

At the outset I had resolved that, whatever else the course might or might not become, it should at least be a serious study of the Latin language. Other-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. E. Foster, quoted in the *Classical Journal*, X, No. 1 (October, 1914), 32, and B. L. D'Ooge, on p. 38 of the same number; also J. C. Kirtland, *ibid.*, X, No. 5 (February, 1915), 232; J. J. Schlicher, quoted *ibid.*, XI, No. 3 (December, 1915), 157 ff.; and Charles Knapp, quoted in the *Classical Weekly*, VIII, No. 23 (April 17, 1915), 184.

<sup>2</sup> Preparation for the study of Spanish is given special attention in the plan described by Mr. H. L. Senger, "Latin in the Commercial High School," *Classical Journal*, XI, No. 2 (November, 1915), 106 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The experiment is described in two papers, "Latin as a 'Practical' Study," and "Latin as a Vocational Study in the Commercial Course," *Classical Journal*, VIII, No. 7 (April, 1913), 301 ff., and X, No. 1 (October, 1914), 7 ff.

wise, pupils would better spend their time in a study of Latin roots and prefixes in connection with English.<sup>1</sup>

The reading-matter was specially selected for the students who took this work; and that the course answers to the supreme test of awakening a feeling of literary appreciation will be clear from the following extract from Mr. Perkins' second paper:

This sense of appreciation was noticeable during the whole of the latter half of the year. In fact, the pupils followed the fate of Roscius of Ameria with almost breathless interest, and when we read selections from the *Verrines* were astonished to discover that "graft" was by no means a modern development. But it was the study of Vergil that interested them most—to such a degree, indeed, that several read the whole of the *Aeneid* in translation. In other words, the pupils seemed so hungry for something spiritual, some relief, as it were, from the matter-of-fact detail of their bookkeeping or commercial geography, that I am inclined to think the refining influence of the literature is one of the important features of the course.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Perkins closes his paper with a modest plea for favorable consideration of the work he is attempting. In the judgment of the writer he deserves the highest praise for so successfully bringing the benefits of Latin study to a class of students who normally would be cut off from the advantage of such a course. Indeed, one wonders whether students prepared by his method would not be able to enter a third-year Latin class. Perhaps, in some cases at least, such fruit will be borne by vocational Latin. A large city, known to the writer, some time ago established a manual-arts school, in which it was understood that no Latin should be taught, other schools in the city making generous provision for students of the literary type. But it was not long before beginning Latin found its way into the curriculum of the manual-arts school, which at the present time has the full four-year Latin course, with three teachers giving full time to the subject. Administrative limitations doubtless now hem in vocational Latin; but surely the ideal vocational course is one which, while contributing to the student's business efficiency, at the same time lays so thorough a Latin foundation that the subject could be carried farther should other circumstances allow.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, No. 7, 305.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, X, No. 1, 10 ff.



It is necessary to point out two dangers that attend the institution of courses in vocational Latin.

1. The phrase "vocational Latin" has a practical sound that will doubtless recommend it in many quarters where the full bearing of the question is not fully understood. Thus, in a high school of the ordinary type, with a four-year Latin course established or in course of development, an inexperienced teacher might very easily be induced to introduce incautiously into the lower work a radical type of vocational Latin that would make utter havoc of the four-year course—quite needlessly, perhaps, for probably every real demand of the situation would be met by conducting the work along regular lines, with additional emphasis upon the relation of Latin and English.

2. In the vocational Latin of the commercial or other similar course there will be the continual temptation to make the work "vocational" rather than "Latin." In his first paper Mr. Perkins says of this difficulty: "The boys and girls, while interested in their study of words, were by no means enthusiastic when made to learn forms and constructions, without which there can be no real study of Latin."<sup>1</sup> In describing the course in the Woodward High School, Cincinnati, Mr. Senger says: "In this connection we may note that the subjunctive mode is ignored throughout the course—both as to inflection and as to syntax."<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore, easy to fancy a vocational Latin course degenerating to a point where, as Mr. Perkins puts it, "pupils would better spend their time in a study of Latin roots and prefixes in connection with English."

From the maintenance of courses of this character little benefit to the cause of Latin can be expected. On the other hand, there is most decidedly a place for vocational courses in which there is a sound central core of Latin. Not only will such work open up a new field to students who otherwise would have no chance at all to study Latin, but it may even add to the prestige of the subject. For while there is every reason to suppose that the total enrolment in the regular Latin courses will long remain at or near its present high level, it cannot be expected that the *proportion* relative to the total enrolment of our rapidly expanding secondary schools can

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 305.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

long be maintained. When one subject does not grow in the same proportion as others, there is likely to be an undeserved loss of prestige. By moving out into this new field, vocational Latin may help to preserve for the subject some semblance of its old-time universality.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since the above paragraphs were put into type, Mr. Perkins has contributed a further article to the *Classical Journal* on "The Dorchester Experiment in Vocational Latin" (XII, No. 2, pp. 131 ff.). In this article Mr. Perkins seems to be working toward the notion that Latin as a high-school subject is in a very bad way, and that the one hope of saving it lies in introducing intensive vocabulary work of the vocational type into the regular Latin instruction. Moreover, he falls into the all too common tactical error of playing into the hands of the enemy by discounting and disparaging all arguments for the study of Latin excepting the one in which he is at present interested. The writer is not in sympathy with this idea nor with the method of procedure. This fact, however, does not detract from his appreciation of the efforts of Mr. Perkins and others to widen the field of Latin instruction by *adding* a vocational department.